



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

Emergency Logistics Management: Transforming the Delivery of Disaster Relief for the 21st Century

September 29, 2010 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Communication, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee hearing entitled “Emergency Logistics Management: Transforming the Delivery of Disaster Relief for the 21st Century”:

“The distribution and management of goods and services during disasters is critically important to meeting the needs of disaster victims.

Two years ago, this Subcommittee held an unprecedented joint hearing with the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee to examine the logistics management challenges identified after Hurricane Katrina.

Today, we are here to see if FEMA has made good on its promises to take corrective action.

As the Chairwoman described, there were many obstacles hindering FEMA’s response during Katrina, including the lack of a robust and modern logistics IT system.

FEMA’s new Logistics Supply Chain Management System (previously called the Total Asset Visibility system), is supposed to guide the Agency’s delivery of disaster relief well into the 21st century.

At an estimated price tag of over a quarter billion dollars (\$321 million), it most certainly should.

Astonishingly, nearly a third of the cost, \$110 million, is designated for operation and maintenance over five years.

With O&M costs so high, I question whether we are building a system that is expected to fail.

This Committee will be conducting vigorous oversight on this system because we cannot afford to have delays and cost-overruns like other large IT projects at DHS.

As with most homeland security issues, however, technology alone will not solve every issue.

In my home state of Mississippi, for example, we witnessed massive distribution and pre-staging problems during Katrina, which was more a result of poor strategic planning and management.

Thankfully, the new Logistics Directorate is larger than ever, with over 120 full time positions and dozens more transitioning from part time posts.

We welcome this added expertise. But, with this larger cadre, comes greater expectations.

Surely, you will agree that we can do a better job of procuring, storing, and disposing of FEMA’s temporary housing units and trailers.

As you know, contaminated Katrina trailers appeared again along the Gulf coast during the oil spill clean-up efforts. This misstep demonstrates that we must re-think the way we manage FEMA

trailers.

Like other disasters, the oil spill clean-up efforts utilized countless volunteers and relied heavily on the generosity of the American people.

Today, FEMA utilizes the National Donations Management Network for channeling donations to those in need, which is a portal to an online AidMatrix network.

This web-based application is used by charities and states across the country to match individual donations with disaster needs.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how the AidMatrix network is progressing and how FEMA logistics and charitable organizations work together during disasters.”

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